

# *BULLS MINIATURE RIFLE CLUB*

## **1922 – 2024**

The Bulls Miniature Rifle Club came into being in 1922 and it met in the Bulls Town hall where the range was built under the stage.

A report in the Manawatu Standard dated 24th November 1919 stated that the Rangitikei Miniature Rifle Club shot and lost a match against the Linton Club. This may have been the start of the club, as it is known that the Marton Club was functioning at that time, but it was more than likely the local Defence Rifle Club had a branch of shooters that shot with miniature rifles. It is without doubt these shooters formed the nucleus of the Bulls Club several years later and called itself the Bulls Miniature Rifle Club.

The club later shifted to the Clifton Hall which had originally been the site of the old Clifton Hotel. In those early days the club was affiliated to the Wanganui Districts Rifle Association before it joined up with the Manawatu association in 1925.

The club had its first recorded win in the McKelvie Cup competition against Rongotea in June 1923, holding it for several challenges before losing it to Marton.

In one report in September 1928 in a McKelvie Cup challenge against Bunnythorpe, one Bunnythorpe rifleman accidentally 'let one away' but, on being given another shot, registered a 'bull'. Then on the Bulls side, C Edwards (a crack shot), was unable to attend, and the visitors were generous enough to offer a replacement by a member of the team that had already shot. Bulls paid for their sporting gesture on that occasion by losing by 2 points.

A report on an accident which occurred on the range in June 1934 states that, while testing a new barrel for a .22 rifle, T Prichard was operating the rifle which was clamped in a vice, when a cartridge jammed. He removed the cartridge and recommenced test firing, but when one shot had been fired he heard a cry, and on looking round found that a man (T Booking) and a youth (John Prichard) had both been struck. Both had gone to examine the target, thinking the test was complete. Mr Booking was struck in the calf of one leg while John Prichard was struck in the leg and an arm, but all the wounds were in the fleshy part. They were immediately conveyed to the Doctor, and were reported to be little the worse for their experience.

The Clifton Hall was used as a range for the club until 1936, when permission to use the range was revoked. The hall was later condemned and demolished. During 1937 the club applied for permission to shoot on the neighbouring Ohakea range.

The Rangitikei Defence Rifle Club, which had been defunct for many years, was reformed in 1931 on land leased from the Bulls Borough Council. This covered an area of 17.5 acres on which a range of up to 900 yards could be obtained. A peppercorn rental was charged on the condition that the land be kept clear of gorse and broom.

During the 1936-37 period, the Club had the formidable distinction of repelling 20 consecutive challenges for the McKelvie Cup. To this day this record still stands.

In 1938 the Defence Club donated funds towards the erection of a clubhouse in cooperation with the Bulls MRC.

In 1944 the Defence Club was disbanded and the Miniature Rifle Club took over the building under a prior agreement. In those days it was just a tin shed, unlined, with cobwebs in the rafters, and the mound was on the floor in a line across the building where the present marking room is. It was later extended to cover an area where the mound is now situated, with big doors to be opened each night, and long grass that had to be cut before the shooting season commenced. An iron fence ran down each side of the open range.

Shooting on cold frosty nights was no fun in those days, but most shooters had an army greatcoat to wear, and there was always a chip heater going so one could thaw out. It was only in the 1950s that the tunnel was finally built to keep out the cold and the opossums. Since then the tunnel has been lined, and later the main room was lined, and a ceiling put in which came from the fire damaged Rugby House.

By 1999 the Bulls Smallbore Rifle Club was competing in the interclub series conducted by the Manawatu Association with a somewhat reduced membership, merely a shadow of a once powerful and strong club.

After a recruitment drive in 2006, some Bulls members began attending all the weekend competitions and qualifying for the annual North - South competitions.

This led in 2009 to the first Bulls members making NZ teams. Dave Edmonds NZ Open, and daughter Amber Edmonds in NZ Juniors.

Another milestone occurred in 2022 When Bulls won the interclub challenge "McKelvie Cup" against Rongotea. Rongotea had held it for 18 years running, and Bulls had last won it in 1958.

Currently, Bulls members actively shoot in most of the available competitions and do very well. For a small membership club the Club members continue to punch above their weight.

